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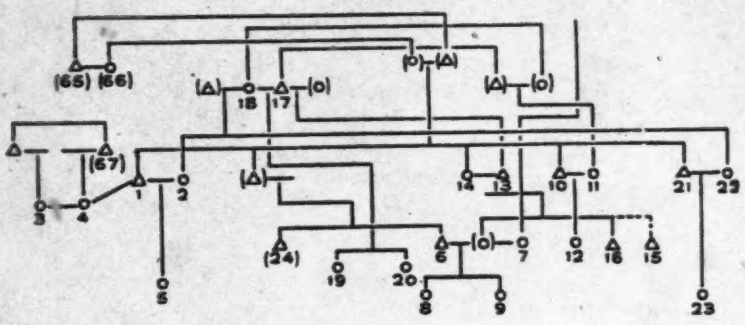

Fig. 11.
Genealogical composition of group a1.

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115
157 A1. --The chief of the group. He is a man of about 35 years, married to three women: a2, by whom he has a daughter a5, and a3 and a4, both daughters of "sister," without child.

A1 is remarkably intelligent, conscious of his responsibilities, active, enterprising and ingenious. When we went to visit his village, he did not hesitate to follow a new itinerary, unknown to him, because our horses could not pass along the habitual path. And when we arrived at the village, we found the stakes necessary to tie our oxen and horses, which he had had set up by a party sent a few hours ahead of time.

His attitude concerning writing is very revealing. He immediately understood his role of signing (1), and the social superiority which it

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1. The Nambikwara of group a are completely ignorant of drawing, if one excepts a few geometric tracings on gourds. For several days they did not know what to do with the paper and pencils which we distributed to them. A little later, we saw them deeply engrossed in tracing wavy lines. In doing this they were imitating the only use which they had seen us make of our note pads, that is, for writing, but without understanding the purpose and significance.

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Besides, they called the act of writing: iekariukediutu (a1), that is "make lines," which for them had an esthetic interest:

(3) Kihikagnere mũʔiene (b1).
It is nice to make lines.

[177]

The drawings reproduced in Figure 19 thus constitute a cultural innovation inspired by our own drawings.

622 confers; also [41] he asked us for a note pad and a pencil, and we
115 are likewise equipped when we travel together. He does not com-
● 157 municate to me verbally the information that I ask of him, but traces on his paper some wavy lines and presents them to me as though I should read his response. But he himself is half duped by his comedy. Each time that his hand finishes a line, he examines it anxiously, as if the significance should miraculously spring forth, and each time, the same chagrined disillusion is painted on his face. But he doesn't give in. And it is silently understood between us that his scrawl possesses a meaning which I pretend to understand. Naturally, the verbal commentary follows almost immediately, and excuses me from having to demand some very necessary clarifications. When we discuss command, we shall return to certain aspects of this semi-mystification.

He is a valuable informant who understands the problems, perceives the difficulties, and is interested in the work; but his functions absorb him often, and he disappears for whole days on a hunting expedition, a survey of itinerary or a localization of ripe seed or fruit trees. On the other hand, his wives often call him to tender love games in which he lets himself be voluntarily involved.

In a general way, his attitude shows a logic, a continuity of purpose, very exceptional among the Nambikwara who are often unstable and temperamental. Placed in other conditions and with other means at his disposal, he might be a valuable organizer. And he is, after all, alone responsible for the destinies of his group, which he conducts with competence, although in a sometimes utopian spirit.

The father and the mother of A1 are dead. But his father's brother and mother's sister, whom he calls ahuĩnosu and aʔkenosu live in the same village (A65 and a66).

115 a2. --About 30 to 35 years. The eldest of the wives of A1, mother of a5, daughter of a18 and a now dead father. She is serious industrious, a little reserved in social relations. In the triple household

In the triple household

115 of A1, she plays the role of the guardian of the home, and she is al-
[59] ways seen occupied in some culinary or craft job. She reveals
● 15 little voluntarily, but when she decides to do it, her information is clear and precise. It is always to her that one has recourse to settle knotty cases, to complete a vocabulary of kinship, to respond to a systematic interrogation.

115 a3. --Vigorous girl of some twenty years, secondary wife of A1.
15 Her mother (a63), arindesu of A1, akenanosu of a2, is at present married to an asukosu of A1. Her father, dead, was a brother of the father of a4.

She is exuberant, always good-humored, ready to go with her husband on the hardest expeditions, capable of carrying heavy loads. She is a true "force of nature"; physically, she is not without [42] charm, she is smiling and full of good health. As an informant she is vague, practically useless.

a4. --About 17 or 18 years of age, the youngest of the wives of A1. Her father and her mother (A67 and a68) are living, asoinosu and a2einosu of A1, ouensaesu and aseetasu of a2. She is pretty, coquettish and provocative, does not give herself over to any appreciable activity, except on a trip when she becomes the active collaborator of her husband. She talks voluntarily, laughs a great deal, is very curious about our clothing, utensils, manner of eating and living. Totally inefficient as an informant.

a5. --Eight to 9 years. Daughter of A1 and a2. She has a very
[142] marked sub-nasal prognathism, and has, on the left cheek, a sort of small pimply hole, without doubt due to a tropical ulcer. She is a very calm and amiable child, sensitive to our advances, but who, when she is annoyed, shows sudden fits of anger or outbursts of somber humor during which she is unapproachable. The rest of the time she loves our company and collaborates willingly on the ethnographic work.

A6. --About 30 years: he is the son of an older vanished brother of A1; he calls his paternal uncle "father," the wife a2 of the latter, "mother," and the little a5 "sister." From a first marriage with the daughter of his father's sister (a14), now dead, he has two children (a8 and a9). He is at present remarried (to a7). Otherwise he is vain, satisfied with himself, not very intelligent, a very good father and very taken with his young wife with whom he is always found tenderly embraced. He is a verbose informant, but dull and without personality.

115 a7.--A pretty woman of some twenty years, perhaps less; young
157 wife of A6. Her parents are living and reside, she says, in the village. She is asintu of A1 and a2, arindesu of a3 and a4, aseetasu of a5. She is stupid, egotistical, interested only in herself. She considers herself very seductive, which appears to be (from the Indian point of view, of course) very exaggerated. She systematically refuses to show the slightest interest in the two daughters of her husband, conducts herself very amorously as concerns him.

115 a8 and a9--About six and two years, daughters of the first mar-
855 riage of A6 and daughters of the deceased daughter of a14. The two
157 children are practically left to themselves. Their stepmother does not bother with them; their father takes care of them when his manly tasks and his wife permit him the time. Their grandmother is their
[603] chief aid and it is to her that they run when they hurt themselves, are hungry, thirsty or afraid. But she herself is absorbed by the cares of her sons, of her stepson (A15) and of her husband. And very often the baby is neglected for entire days, covered with ashes and filth, unless some woman of the group, seized by pity or simply [43] disgusted, takes her and gives her a bath. Most often it is her big sister, precociously mature, who takes care of her, carries her, even though she is scarcely any bigger, feeds her and cleans her up. Both are charming children, gay and hungry for caresses like those who are habitually deprived of them. Their lot is a great worry for the
[161] community. Under this regime of a hard life constantly absorbed by the small tasks, each one of which is hard work, one can with difficulty accept other cares than one's own. And these neglected children are a perpetual source of irritation, of which they are often the victims, even when taken care of. Many times we wondered if we should not take charge of the youngest of the children. They would have given her to us gladly. The baby was so cute that we would have been tempted if the perspective of seeing ourselves having a quarrel on the return trip with the Service for the Protection of the Indians had not, very reasonably, dissuaded us.

115 A10.--About 40 years. He is alonsu of A1, ajunkedisu of a2,
157 ahuinosu of a5, married to a11. His parents are dead. He is amiable and grinning, he suffers from a hernia which he hides under a piece of cloth hanging from his waist. His activity is considerably decreased. He is little interested in our work and not very eager to understand our questions and give us information.

a11.--About 40 years. Wife of A10. She is a "sister" of a2, a "wife" of A1, a "mother" of a5. She is dark, eager and industrious,

115 and only reveals her happy nature on occasions of songs and dances where
157 she excels. One always sees her occupied by some craft work which she seems to prefer--shaping or polishing disks of shells, drilling them through or filing them, rubbing earrings or bracelets. She talks little, letting herself be completely absorbed by her work. She is a wife and mother, and a remarkable informant for all details of the material culture.

a12. --Daughter of the preceding two, approximately 22 years; she is the wife of A73 who abandoned her to live with two women a74 and a75. Because of this, she returned to the charge of her parents, the more so because she is pregnant. She is placid, smiling and apathetic. She is separated from collective life by her condition
[164] and by a painful eye infection which struck her first among the members of her group of which several were later attacked by the epidemic.

A13. --About 40 years of age. Son of A18, "brother," consequently, of a2, "brother-in-law" of A1, whose older sister a14 he married. Always joyful, active and docile, he is the confidence man of A1, his preferred messenger, the companion he chooses for all complicated undertakings. He is industrious, a [44] not affected in his attitudes, and, as an informant, compliant; very verbose and not always clear or comprehensive.

a14. --About 40 to 45 years. Wife of the preceding, blood sister of A1, mother of A16. She is influential, active, diligent, at first quite rude, but in reality pleasing and competent. She exercises real authority over the other women of the group by her spirit of initiative and her pep. She is the grandmother of a8 and of a9 whom she feeds and whom she cares for frequently. Not only is she a good informant, but she sometimes takes didactic initiative. She loves songs and dances.

[608] A15. --About 15 years. He is an orphan; his father was the brother of A13 who took him in. A gentle, tranquil, rather timid boy.

A16. --7 or 8 years; son of A13 and of a14, "husband" of a5. He is a lively and curious child; his mother rarely refuses him anything, and he tyrannizes her willingly. She is very proud of him and overlooks many of his whims. One day she came to ask us to teach him to read. The attempts are not very encouraging. He looks upon the lessons as a game and refuses to learn the letters as determined forms; for him they are interchangeable, and he attributes to them in turn all the sounds which he has in his vocabulary.

115 A17. --Between 50 and 55 years, he is the dean of the group; he
157 is conscious of this and gets a certain pride from having around him
602 only "sons" or "daughters," "sons-in-law" and "daughters-in-law,"

115 grandchildren and great-grandchildren. He is physically robust,
157 amiable, happy and talkative; very much inclined toward erotic
602 jokes. He gives information willingly, with an extreme good will and a tireless volubility. But his explanations are not always clear, and it is necessary to let oneself be guided by his slightly incoherent fantasy.

115 a18.--About 45 years; wife of the preceding, mother of a2 and
157 a22. She is a serious woman, industrious, devoted to her husband and children. She laughs little, talks to herself, and is always busy with some task. Her bits of information are rare, but solid.

a19.--About 10 years. Daughter of the two preceding. She is a very pretty girl, still a child who yet scarcely shows the first signs of puberty. She has in the group a position as "mother," as does her little sister a20. She is a brutal and sometimes violent child, who adopted towards us an attitude confined to hostility. Her language is crude and she gets involved willingly in the most daring pranks. This attitude is at least partially explained, as will be seen farther on, by her age situation.

[45] a20.--Little girl of 5 or 6 years, sister of the preceding: her contemporaries and even some adults call her "mother." She is perfectly insufferable; pretentious, affected, continually greedy for presents or distractions.

A21, a22, a23.--It is difficult to characterize these three individuals who lived, during nearly the whole time of our visit, in an almost absolute state of silent segregation. The baby a23 is not yet weaned, and the state of couvade was to end at the end of our stay. We shall describe later on the operations which sanction return to communal life. A21, 35 to 40 years, is the brother of A1; a22, about 18 years, the sister of a2. A21 was to die by drowning during one of our absences. The baby is 12 to 18 months old.

621 As we have said before, the restricted group such as it has just been described, is temporarily united with other similar bands, or is temporarily swelled by other family groups. Thus to the 6 "fires"(1)

602 1. As the following analysis shows, the family group—that is the restricted group—of the Nambikwara is rather difficult to define. The empiric notion of the hearth seems to us the most clear and practical. It defines the grouping of the individuals who come together in the evening and sleep around the same fire. In group a1 (restricted) studied previously, there are

621 We shall comment later (1) on the complex motives that might have induced

1. Cf. p. 77.

[197] these two bands, speaking different dialects and who were not even capable of understanding one another without an interpreter, to practically merge. It seems that group b1 was composed of the rare survivors of a formerly important formation now disappeared, living previously in two distinct groups, around the sources of the eastern tributaries of the Roosevelt River. We have already tried to calculate these losses, resulting from recent epidemics (2). Group c had,

2. Cf. above, p. 6.

[578] without doubt, gone through the same hardships. Moreover, its position had been compromised by antagonisms with other bands rising from the same dialect, and who had formerly been their allies. A visit, with a commercial goal, of related Indians originally from the south (members of the group known by the name of Kabisi) must have raised the forces of group b1 to 31 persons for several days. Here is its composition at this moment:

621 115 157 622 601

Fire 1 (1 to 7). --The family of the chief of the band. The chief, B1, is 30 to 35 years old, and one of the most intelligent Indians whom it was our privilege to encounter. But he is intelligent in a way very different from A1. The latter is prudent and very resourceful, always meditating some political combination. On the contrary, B1 is not a man of action, but rather contemplative, with a charming and poetic spirit, and rich sensibilities. He is fully conscious of the inevitable decadence of his people, and this conviction often shades his words with a subtle tint of melancholy:

(4) joãmditnãe nãmaipe beni niho ãmdednãen. (b1)

"I also did the same thing, now it is finished," [51] he says, remembering happier days when his group, far from being reduced to a handful of individuals incapable of keeping alive their traditional customs, was comprised of several hundreds of participants faithful to all the manifestations of the Nambikwara culture. His curiosity toward our customs and towards those which we had been able to observe in other tribes is just as great as ours. With him, ethnographic work is never unilateral. He conceives of it only as an exchange of information, and what we bring him is always very welcome. Often

[17] he even asks us for—and preserves carefully—drawings representing

621 feather ornaments, hair styles, arms, such as we have seen among
115 neighboring or faraway peoples. Did he entertain the hope of per-
157 fecting the material and intellectual equipment of his group thanks
622 to this information? It is possible, even though his dreamy tempera-
177 ment hardly ever drives him to realizations. However, one day when
601 we were interrogating him concerning the Pan pipes, to verify the
area of diffusion of that instrument, he answered that he had never
[537] seen any, but that he would like to have a drawing (different from
group a, group b does not have real pipes of Pan, but instruments
made of two or three tubes of equal length and giving approximately
the same note, tied together with cotton thread and wax). With the
aid of our sketch he succeeded in making a crude but usable instru-
ment.

621 B1 had two wives: b2, about 25 years, mother of two little
601 girls of 5 to 7 years, b4 and b5; and b3, older than he (about 40
years old), mother of a boy of 7 years, B6, and of a girl of 9 years,
b7.

Fire 2 (8 and 9). --A son of a deceased brother of B1, whom the
latter then calls "son" (about 25 years old), and his wife about 18,
sister of B13; no information about the father and mother.

Fire 3 (10 to 12). --B10 is a brother of B8, and B1 calls him "son"
also. His wife, b11, of undetermined parentage, is about 20 years
old, and his daughter b12 about 6.

Fire 4 (13 and 14). --This household presents the only sure case of
oblique marriage in group b1. B13, about 25 years, married a girl
of 16 or 17, b14, daughter of a dead son of the dead brother of B1;
he calls her then, as seen before, tasuite.

Fire 5 (15 to 17). --These three individuals are the last survivors
of a related group destroyed by an epidemic. After the disaster,
they joined the band of B1. B15, about 35 years, is the brother of
b2, thus tanute of B1. His wife, the same age, b16, is a sister of B1,
thus ndedere of b2. Their son, B17, is about 5. The daughters of
B1 call him (B17) "husband," and he calls them "wives."

621 [52] The visitors. --They came from the region lying between
574 the sources of the tributaries of the left bank of the Juruena and of
601 those of the right bank of the Guaporé. All were related to their
hosts, and were distributed among three generations. The oldest was
comprised of three individuals: B18, about 50 years old, father of
B21, B25, B27, and B29; his wife b19, the same age, paternal aunt
of B1; and the brother of the wife, B20, 40 years. Besides the
children of B18 already mentioned (from 20 to 30 years old), the next

593 The conversation becomes animated and laughter spreads. In the dark
182 462 prairie the camp fires burn. Around the fire, the only protection
against the cold which descends, behind the frail windbreak of palms
[342] and branches hastily planted in the ground on the side where wind or
[415] rain is expected; near the baskets filled with poor objects which constitute their whole earthly treasure; lying on the ground which extends around, haunted only by other bands equally hostile and fearful, the couples, embracing tightly, are truly seen as the support of one another, the comfort, the only help against the daily difficulties and the dreamy melancholy invades the Nambikwara soul from time to time. The visitor who camps in the brush with the Indians for the first time feels tenderness as well as anguish and pity before the spectacle of this humanity so completely unprotected; crushed, apparently against the soil of a hostile land by some implacable cataclysm; naked, shivering around the hesitant fires. He circulates tip-toe among the underbrush, in the dark, avoiding crushing in his walk a hand, an arm, a trunk, whose warm reflections are seen by the light of the fires. But this misery is animated by whispering and laughter. [56] The couples clasp one another as in the nostalgia of a lost union. Their caresses, at the same time tender and candid, are not interrupted by the passage of the stranger. One senses in all
[57] of them an immense gentleness, a profound carelessness, a naive and charming animal satisfaction, and, emanating from all that, something like the most moving and credible expression of human tenderness.

593 Thus it is not surprising that the attitude of the two sexes as con-
831 cerns one another is characterized by intense interest. This interest
462 is translated in certain cases by the vocabulary. In fact the Nambikwara
562 have only one word to express "pretty" and "young," and a single word to
[517] signify "ugly" and "old" (munjene, jeʔene, bl). Their esthetic judgments are thus based essentially on human considerations, and above all, sexual ones. But the interest which is manifested between the sexes is of a complex nature. Men judge women in a mass, as being a little different from themselves. Depending on the situation, they consider them with desire, admiration, or tenderness. In itself the confusion of terms pointed out above constitutes permanent homage. But it must not be forgotten that the form of economic adaptation realized by sexual division of labor a capital role attributes to the women, since family life rests to a very large degree (probably the greatest) on the collecting of the women, but it represents an
[53] inferior type of activity. The ideal life is conceived on the model of agricultural production or hunting. To have plenty of manioc, and

855 8. ŋerisekihĩndage numĩ sekolajene elamnihĩ (b1)
863 The child has urinated! the hide! he is dirty! throw out(the urine)!

Later, when the child can isolate himself but not yet clean himself up, he is seen returning on all fours to his mother and remaining in that position while she applies the small twig in the way that has been previously described.

142 All children seem to have a pigmented blotch at birth to which
856 no particular belief is attached. The informants only mention the phenomenon with that positive and detached attitude so striking on their part:

9. ŋĩtte ʂedeʂedednege tõodaŋige kã kã kã ŋudẽrige (b1)
the children marked with green are born, one day, one day, one day, it disappears.

The disappearance of the blotch actually seems to be very rapid.

593 One should, naturally, distinguish true parentage and classificatory
602 parentage. The child does not adopt any particular form of conduct
609 towards his "fathers" and "mothers" in the classificatory sense of the word. He treats them like other adults of the group. Often, furthermore, an individual calls a boy or girl much younger than himself father or mother (thus a13 and a20 are "mothers" of A6 and A24).
[597] When an orphan is taken in by a parallel uncle or aunt, the classificatory parents take the place of true parents, and consequently the
[601] conduct changes. In general, the Indians do not use [67] a term to distinguish classificatory parents and children from blood ones. When seeking precision, they add the word taŋẽttu (a1), taŋẽtte (b1): "my little one," to the term for son or daughter (aʔkiraru, aʔkineru), whose connotation seems thus to be social first of all. The physiological acceptance of this springs from the fact that the word is also used to designate the young of animals, other terms being reserved for relationships of parentage in the human family.

855 The Nambikwara feel very real affection for their children, and
157 show it as regards them, and they are repaid in turn. But these sentiments, however real and profound they may be, are often masked behind the nervousness and instability so characteristic of indigenous conduct. Also, as the following example will show, the risk is to let oneself be fooled by apparent indifference, and even momentary rudeness.

Little A16 suffers from indigestion; he has a headache, vomits, passes half the time groaning and the other half sleeping. He is ill, (intikãtu, a1), but no one, parents included, pays the least attention,

855 and he is left alone a whole day. When evening comes, however,
157 his mother cares for him tenderly, removes lice from him while he sleeps, signals to others not to approach, and makes for him a sort of cradle in her arms.

854 A young mother, c21, plays with her baby giving him little slaps
157 on the back. The baby begins to laugh, and she gets excited by the game to such an extent that she hits him harder and harder, so that he cries. Then she stops and consoles him.

736 We saw the little orphan girl a9, whom everyone loves, literally trampled during a dance. She had fallen in the general excitement
858 of the celebration without anyone paying any attention. On the other hand, when they are opposed, children readily strike their
865 mother, and the latter does not fight back. Children are never
861 punished, and we have never seen one of them spanked, nor even the
855 gesture made, except as a joke. Sometimes, a child cries (1) because
515

1. The tears of a child are not called by the same name as those shed ritually by adults in the course of mourning. In the first case: to weep, nãṣere, nãdige; in the second: to weep, doriãgeṣere (b1).

he has hurt himself, was in a fight, or is hungry,

10. ụ̃ṭsotnaniena narũdnerajena indõtenajena ũ̃ⁿkeere (b1) the child cries, he is thirsty, he is hungry, he wishes to eat,

or because he does not want to be deloused. But this last case is rare, for delousing seems to charm the patient as much as it amuses the operator. It is also held to be a mark of interest and affection. When he wishes to be deloused, the child—or the husband--places his head on the woman's knees, presenting the two sides of his head in succession. The operator proceeds by parting hair or looking through the strands. The louse that is caught is immediately crushed. The child who cries is quickly consoled by [68] a member of his family or by an older child. In general, they have little to com-
[861] plain about. Very pampered, rarely scolded, never whipped, they live free, useless and lazy.

854 Also, the sight of the mother and her child is usually full of gaiety and freshness. The mother holds an object out to the baby through the straw of the shelter and withdraws it at the moment the baby thinks he has it:

857 b5, who insists that the treatment that one gives the small ani-
609 mal to divest it of its hair be applied to the ethnologist:

21. nʔiuyenãghẽẽ nʔuuẽeguedne (b1)
Put his beard in the fire! Roast his beard!

857 In general, they are to be good companions, enthusiastic, and
● 157 untiringly avid for games that are shown them. In exchange, they are very obliging informants once they have become friends. Al-
[551] most all the information which we were able to gather concerning proper names comes from them.[1]

231 This chapter cannot be ended without presenting some observations relating to domestic animals. Not only do the children actually live in very intimate relationships with the animals, but the latter are treated in the family like real children at least outwardly. We mean that they share the group's food, benefit from the same manifestations of tenderness or interest—delousing, games, conversation, caresses—as the human beings. In everything, their treatment is [73] curiously the same. The Nambikwara have numerous domestic animals, first of all dogs, and cocks and hens, who are all descendants of those introduced in their region by the Rondon Commission; monkeys, parakeets, birds of various kinds, and finally, the caetetu, the coati (Nasua sp.), the jaguatirica. Only the dog seems to have acquired an
[224] occasionally utilitarian role in the service of women, for hunting with the digging stick (cf. quotation No. 16). The men never use them for hunting with bow and arrow. The other ani-
231 mals are raised for the purpose of pleasure. They are not eaten,
262 the people do not consume the eggs of the hens who lay them in the bush. But they do not hesitate to devour a young bird if it dies after a vain attempt at acclimatization.

The terms used for behavior regarding animals are the same as those used for humans. They say dehẽna uɾtte uɾkɔrage, "the woman caresses the baby," or uãinuẽtte uɾkɔrage, "the woman caresses the puppy."

231 While traveling, except for the animals capable of walking,
482 the whole menagerie is packed with the other baggage. The monkeys, attached to the women's hair, adorn them with an amusing living helmet, elongated by the long tail curled around the neck of the bearer. The parakeets and hens perch on top of the baskets, other animals are held in the arms. None of them receive abundant nourishment but, even in days of need, they
231 521 have their share, however little it may be. As compensation, they are an endless subject of distraction for the group, the

[1] [ie. From the children.--Analyst]

224 602 that of the members of a same bilateral family. Likewise, in the pounding of manioc, a2, a14, a18, a22 often work together and prepare a collective mass which will be divided among the same families, and will serve as food for the same persons as those represented in the above chart.

602 603 157 We do not know whether to attribute certain striking behavior of A17 to his classificatory position or to his individual characteristics. He is very clearly conscious of his almost patriarchal position in the midst of the group and of the fact that all the members, or almost all, are as regards him: asuittu, asuittu, tauéttu, tauéttu, tauéttu; he dwells on it, complacently enumerating the terms with grand gestures. He is gay, jovial and finds evident satisfaction in conversation about erotic subjects, contributions to which he enhances by mimicry and appropriate contortions. Within the group, in whose activities he shares only partially, he holds no authority, explicit or implicit.

RELATIVES AND ALLIED INDIVIDUALS
OR
COLLATERALS AND RELATIVES BY MARRIAGE

602 606 There is no apparent difference between the behavior of an individual as regards his spouse's parents and his behavior as regards his own parents. That is, from the point of view of individual relationships, the order of generations takes precedence over that of degrees. Parents-in-law, parents of the third degree, are concretely classed in the second generation ("fathers" and "mothers"). The same can be said for relationships of the wife's father and mother, or of the husband's, with the spouse of these latter. No special prohibition could be noted.

607 605 Sisters-in-law (aseétasu, a1; ndédere, b1) enjoy very free contacts among themselves. They laugh, joke together, do one another small services such as that of mutually rubbing the back with the tincture of urucu (Bixa orellana). However, one is in the presence of completely exceptional relationships [76] when one passes on to brothers-in-law (asúkosu, a1; tarúte, b1), or more exactly (since the name asúkosu does not arise from marriage with the sister but is previous to it) to cross-cousins (masc.).

In older versions, the old woman (since the old women share the magic powers of the men among the Nambikwara as also in other tribes) (4) was undoubtedly not content with measuring the

4. Cf. above, p. 101.

fall of water by the duration of the fall of her nuts, she actually provoked it by throwing them. Whatever the case may be, "magical projection" is probably found at the origin of the theme of the throwing of small fruits or grains in South American folklore.

[122] PSYCHOLOGICAL ATTITUDES

The Nambikwara offer the observer a very special psychological and moral aspect, and one which we have not found again either among their immediate neighbors--Paressi, tribes of Guaporé, and Tupi of the Gi-Parana--or among other South American tribes. It is worth an attempt to separate its principal characteristics. Few of the primitive South Americans display so much spontaneity and freedom in their behavior. Few manifest such ease in psychological relationships, and such grace of expression. Thus, in their relationships with the ethnologist, the informants introduce formulae which constitute true sociological inventions in order to respond to a new situation, on the part of individuals who do not use either a formula of greeting or of leave-taking in their own social relationships:

60. tai undeiretnĩ ta eikiredniẽ uĩ iiren undetniẽ
tatiene uĩ iritiani. (b1)
I am going to sleep, I am going away, you go to sleep,
I will stay, you go away.

Or to put an end to an interrogation of which they are weary:

61. iejtiana amnentiẽ hikonariana iatiem amdeniẽ
konahadiau iedetniẽ. (b1)
This is useless, it must be left; one does not see
clearly any more, this is useless, let us leave it;
tomorrow we will talk.

Or again:

62. nakanajõniani nihin naiitiani. (b1)
I have forgotten, wait till I remember.

Their daily life is full of exuberance. It is not only in the games of ball that one hears joyous exclamations:

63. tenũkyẽ tenũkyẽ utanãtiri (b1).
To me! To me! Throw!

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However the artisan at work also makes his wife, child, neighbor participate in the execution of the work on whose vicissitudes he comments gaily:

64. itiouĩ taninjẽ diuĩn... ãmi... kãdaha... munjalina... kãdjanene... nooua... taluunlẽ... nohin... ishena... mũnjena. (b1)
Hold it [the cord] so that I can twist it... let it go! It fell!... There!... It is difficult!.... It is done!.... Does it suit you?.. It is ugly!... No, it is pretty!

The last formula is ritual, it is the one they use at the end of chants and dances; the protagonists excuse themselves: "it is ugly"; and the audience responds: "No, it is pretty!" [708]

[123] This politeness is not always without malice, and compliments sometimes hide attempts at mockery. We cited above the formula used by a group to depreciate their dances in comparison to those of their companions they have just met; (1) but a few hours earlier, disdaining a present of beads

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1. Cf. p. 92.

which I offered and which were not much appreciated because of their color, they advised me:

65. mpẽtin maimãndẽ tumuhĩnde (b1)
Keep them to give to the Maimandé.

One day we were sold poison tubes (by group a2) described as so dangerous that we should abstain from ever opening them under pain of immediate death. They proved to be empty, which testifies to great ingenuity if the mystery was improvised on our account. In any case, it throws a curious light on the relationships between neighboring groups.

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Fig. 19
Left: a man; center: a monkey; right: sketch made by A1 while explaining his genealogy (c. p. 40, fn. 1).

The fact is that purely comical and sometimes childish appearances [157] 797 177 648
sometimes cover attitudes which, without being contradictory to the preceding, are nevertheless very different. The history of the eastern group, in the course of [124] these last years, is very significant in this regard. From 1909 to 1920, the installation of the telegraph line was marked by periodical conflicts alternating with cordial contacts, but in 1925, seven workers of the line were invited to visit (for the first time) the villages of the right bank of the Juruena River where we went later in 1938, and they disappeared there. From this time on, the contacts of the eastern group with the posts of the Rondon Line were interrupted, but in 1933 a Protestant mission was installed not far from the post on the Juruena. It seems that from the beginning relationships were quite strained, the Indians not being satisfied with the presents, very insufficient, they say, by which the missionaries paid for their help in the construction of the house and the planting of the garden. Whatever the case may have been, in 1933 a feverish Indian presented himself at the mission, and publicly received two capsules of "Cafiaspirin" which he took, after which he went to take a bath in the river, had a congestion and died. Through expert practitioners, the Nambikwara concluded that he

had been poisoned. An attack of reprisal was carefully prepared and took place, in the course of which A1 and A5 distinguished themselves. The six persons composing the mission were killed by beating or pierced with arrows, including a baby of two. Only one woman was found alive by an expedition sent to aid them from Cuiabá. The version which she gave of the events coincides exactly with that which we collected from the main protagonists of the other camp.

Poison was still to play a role in the life of A6, and this during our stay. We found ourselves visiting (August 1938) at the camp of a neighboring group (a2), and relationships became quickly strained between A6 and our hosts, undoubtedly over the question of women, so that he got the habit of coming to my camp to seek a more friendly atmosphere, at the same time that he shared my food. This fact was noticed, a delegation of four men came to find me one day, and in quite a menacing tone of voice told me to mix some poison (which they brought me along) in the next dish which I would offer to A6; they thought it advisable and indispensable to do away with him at once, for, they told me, he is "very wicked" (kakore) and "is worth nothing" (ajdotiene). I had the greatest difficulty in getting rid of my visitors without opposing them with a refusal which in turn would have exposed me to animosity which I had just learned it was better to avoid, and I considered my best plan of action to exaggerate my ignorance of the language, and to feign obstinate lack of comprehension. After several attempts, my visitors retired very disappointed. I warned A6 who immediately disappeared. I was to see him again only four months later.

These incidents are characteristic of Nambikwara psychology. The Nambikwara are very open, confident and spontaneous, but they are very sensitive and react with great violence to deception [125] or disappointment. Few primitives are as easily accessible. Few give as free access to their intimate lives, to their beliefs, daily acts, thoughts and sentiments. But despite this facility and cordiality, the visitor, be he an ethnographer or a member of a neighboring tribe—must constantly be on guard and watch his actions; for the slightest imprudence, the least clumsiness, may incite reactions difficult to evaluate among his hosts, and in connection with which recent events are always present to recall that they may be extreme. A6 offered a perfect example of this confidence and spontaneity, allied with brusk manifestations of violence and irritability.

Thus, the Nambikwara character alternately presents two aspects, or more exactly, testifies to a double nature: one which we shall call positive, and which goes much farther in this sense than among many Indians in contact for centuries with the whites; and the other, of metaphysical nature, whose rigor and exaltation at times evoke the mysticism of the North

American Indians. As example of the first aspect we shall mention: the public and "scientific" preparation of the curare; the development of certain therapeutics such as the treatment of ophthalmia by instillation; the flexibility of the sexual division of labor; sexual life in general; the atmosphere of the rites of abstinence; the rational attitude as regards alimentary taboos. Several remarks on this point will make clear the indigenous psychology. The white worms (anaũsu, a1) which are frequently found in the nuts of the bacaiuva palm have been indicated as being inedible. Subsequently we verified that they were eaten in secret by the children. Thus a8 finds them while cracking nuts and gives them to her little sister a9; and furtively she too eats a worm. Her action is noticed by a3 and a4 who cover her with sarcasm. However one day when food is scarce, A1 eats a plate of worms which his young wife a4 has gathered for him, and sadly remarks that, due to lack of meat, he is reduced to this poor fare. The same observation is made about the hawk. Above we showed what constitutes the metaphysical basis of the alimentary taboo concerning the jaguar. However, the current interpretation is entirely different:

66. ujatedednĩ̃ uiliẽ (b1).

I don't eat any of it, it smells bad!

In the face of new situations, the Indians generally react without mysticism. Thus, A1 before the problem of writing; (1) on the other hand,

1. P. 40 f. and p. 89.

the Nambikwara show total indifference toward photography, even when they have understood its purpose. We have never found [126] Indians who tolerated the participation of the camera in the slightest details of their intimate life with such complete indifference.

However, the passage to irrational positions is made with the same brusqueness which characterizes the two attitudes, almost simultaneous, of an infant hilarity before the still unusual sight of an inflated balloon which burns, and of an appeal to evil magic when a second balloon succeeded in rising. (1) Never does the tender indulgence with which the men surround

1. P. 97.

their companions (2) allow one to suspect the actual metaphysical curse

2. P. 56 f.

with which the women are burdened in the Nambikwara culture, excluded under pain of death from collective ceremonies, deaf and blind to the voice

of the Beyond, and condemned to nothingness after death like non-initiated babies. We have described the tender companionship which presides in the relationships between the sexes, and the general harmony which reigns within the groups. But when these are altered, it is to give way to the most extreme solutions, poisoning and murder. It is quite reasonable for the informants to underline spontaneously the role of forgetfulness in funeral rites. (3)

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3. P. 112.

For there is a striking contrast between the joyous irony with which one answers someone who is ignorant enough to inquire about a relative deceased for quite awhile: "ihitu, ihetu" (a1), "to the sand! in the sand!," and the horrible apparition of the atasu which is evoked with ritual sobbing.

Nambikwara rites do not seem to be symbolic in any way. The skeleton-like state of A21 and a22 at the end of the period of abstinence testifies to that, and although ceremonies are rare, they are carried far. The informants speak of periods of three months for the isolation of the young girl entering puberty, and of a bath in the river lasting a whole night as a preliminary to marriage. However much behavior is supple and without complication in daily life, likewise intrusions of the supernatural (in visions and revelations, the séances of shamanism, war dances, etc.) are manifested by the transition to an atmosphere of tragedy. No South American group, to our knowledge, expresses in such a sincere and spontaneous way (for one never feels the theatrical atmosphere of Tupi or chaqueno shamanism) such violent and opposed sentiments, whose individual expression seems inseparable from a social stylization which never betrays them.

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It is far from us to wish to assign an exclusively economic cause to this dualism. Nevertheless, it is astonishing to consider that the psychological dualism goes on an equal footing with the organization of social existence around [127] two opposite poles, on the one hand the sedentary life, agricultural, based on the dual masculine activity of the construction of huts and of gardening; on the other hand, the nomadic period, during which subsistence is principally assured by feminine collecting and gathering, the one representing alimentary security and well-being, the other chance and want. To these two ways of life, one followed in the winter, the other in the summer, the Nambikwara react in very different ways. They speak of the former with the melancholy which is attached to the conscious and resigned acceptance of the human condition, to the dull repetition of identical acts,

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While they speak of the latter with the excitement, and the almost exalted tone, of discovery. Let us listen to an informant (B1) describe the double cycle of the year:

First the sedentary life:

67. nedəntãtage kanaadau hãndige uedəntãnkero, uatliriʼkero 221 539 157 182
Tomorrow go hunting come back again
uakuiʼnikero dãnkero undãkero
cook again go to bed again sleep again
naingiʼkero aireloʼkero ajkənkero
day again go to the field again cultivate the field again
ajngənkero ãamkəro nunãkero uininũnkero
cultivate again leave again eat again
nangiʼkero danunkero taoʼrige tau tau tau
another day cut wood cut cut cut
telunũkero [teloʼndige] mbari mbari mbari
finish again wait wait wait
ʂorũmkero ʂutnunatue [ʂutnũkero] liʼtnutjet
burn again the cold comes [still the cold] plants
denũnkero uaʼaariʼanunkero uaaninũnkero
to go again looking for some return again
iraãkero kakuaidnatue [kajkuande] hiʼkərage kukero
plant much dig again
ikəramukutige liʼtnuraʼnkero
in order to plant dig plants cut again
teloʼndãmkero deinterituapũmkero aurhãikero
finish again live a long time again pull up the roots
etuʔiʼ etuʔiʼ etuʔiʼ hãnkero
grateli grateli grateli finish again
nlakərahinkero nkuaulakərahiʼnkero ãtlakero hĩnkero
guãtau hikəninuni (b1)
a new field again plant again

And now the great adventure of the nomadic period:

68. inkənahaire miʼruere ĩrige
We leave at dawn; [the basket] is made it waits.
[128] ãgərage tuatũrige tua tuikiniʼnkero iʼkəro
one packs; one fills the basket in the woods one travels one travels
nahoreda õkero nlajdiʼnkero ntoraiʼnkero ãinkero
one comes to the water one crosses the water one crosses on the way
ãinkero alorekidiʼrekəro aloraiʼrikəro
on the way! one takes the prairie one crosses the prairie

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ajtuaginĩkəro (in) ŝĩhun lomãnĩnkəro ajkəro
in the forest one travels again the hill one goes down travel
ajkəro ajkəro ajritigəmãnĩnkəro mãgəlanĩnkero
travel travel the hill one goes up the hill one crosses
kəlakalatinĩnkəro erəloranĩnkəro ajrikəro
at the crest one travels one goes down another hill, more walking!
ŝikit(a)titãnərige hajtlikəro ŝikitakãlikəro
In the wet sand travel in the wet sand travel
ŝeinlikəro herhanimnĩnkəro nungenĩnkero
one passes the hut of other people traveling meets others
uelikatnunde ŝiitlĩtte (b1)
one is united with others here are the huts.

As is seen, the two forms of existence not are only very strikingly opposed from the economic and sociological point of view. They constitute two poles around which accumulate complex ensembles of emotions, sentiments and memories. With the same tenderness with which they 157 182 caress their wives, the men evoke the type of life defined by the temporary shelter and the eternal basket, where the most incongruous means of subsistence are sparingly scraped, gathered together, caught each day, where one lives cruelly exposed to wind, cold and rain, and which leaves no more lasting trace than the souls of the women, dispersed by the wind and storms, on whose activity it essentially reposes. And almost like the reign of need is opposed to that of liberty, they conceive in a completely different aspect the sedentary life (whose specific and ancient character is still borne witness to the original species which they cultivate), but upon which the unchangeable chain of agricultural operations confers the same character of perpetuity as the reincarnated masculine souls, the durable house of winter time, and the cultivable land which will begin to live and to produce "when the death of its preceding cultivator shall be forgotten." (1) We do not think it possible to draw conclusions, from a work

1. Cf. quotation, p. 112.

having to do exclusively with several sociological and psychological aspects of the life of the Nambikwara, relative to the place one should assign them in the ensemble of South-American cultures. However, the preceding information suffices to show under what form the problem is posed. We are in [129] the presence of a culture which shows linguistic affinities with the Ŝiḅŝa, and which approaches the Tupi from the double point of view of family organization and religious beliefs, at the same time recalling

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the Ge and the Botocudo in its material culture. (1) In other terms, it

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1. We do not mention the Botocudo by chance. The term "Nambikwara" seems to be a surname of Tupi origin, with the sense of "large ears" (Nhambikwara). However, the Indians who use this name do not use the "bodoque" or any other ornament bringing on the same malformation. Yet it is possible that the name was originally applied to a tribe—or group of tribes—different from that which finally inherited it. In 1931, the telegraph post of Parecis, located 80 kilometers from Diamantino, was attacked and destroyed by some unknown Indians, who descended from an unexplored region somewhere between the Ariños River and the do Sangre River. Since that time, they have repeated their sorties at irregular intervals, so that it was necessary to change the trail going to Utiarity (on the Papagaio River)about 80 kilometers to the south of the telegraph line. The fires of Indian camps were clearly visible at the time of our passage to Parecis, in January 1939. Thanks to two severed heads, brought back a number of years ago by some garimpeiros (searchers of diamonds) who had a bone to pick with these Indians, it is known that the latter wear in the lobe of the ear and in the lower lip some large disks of light wood which recall those of the Suia and Botocudo. For this reason then, they are now called, by the diamond seekers and the gatherers of rubber of the region, by the name of Beiços de Pau, "Mouths of wood." The story is surprising, for people up to then were convinced that the Paressi had remained the sole occupants of these territories, and they themselves seemed completely ignorant of the presence of these dangerous neighbors. We have not found in literature any reference to the "Beiços de Pau" since the beginning of the 18th century; but at that time there is precise testimony: "Further on there is another tribe called Mahibarez... their language differs only slightly (from that of the Paressi), and they have ears with very long pierced lobes which in some of them hang to the shoulder, these being neighbors of the Paressi... and moreover they carry some short swords made from very strong wood... This people lives toward the northern part"

(Antonio Pires de Campos, "Breve noticia, etc.," Revista do Instituto Historico e Geographico Brasileiro, Vol. 25, 1862, p. 445). Cf. also C. Lévi-Strauss, "The name of the Nambikuara," American Anthropologist, Vol. 47, 1945. 101

is the problem of a syncretistic culture which one finds so frequently in South American ethnology. 157 182

When taken from the geographical point of view, the statement of the problem is easily reconstituted. One may ask one how best to interpret the presence of a nucleus of low cultures placed symmetrically, as regards the tributaries of the right bank of the Amazon, to that which occupied, and still occupies, eastern Brazil. Under the two wings of the "T" which sketches the distribution of far more evolved cultures of the Amazon valley, and the Madeira, with the long vertical zone which extends from the Xingu to the Tocantins, the low level Gé to the east, and the Nambikwara to the west, produce an equilibrium, like isolated islands. In the case of the Nambikwara, a supplementary problem is raised, that of the duality of their culture and their type of life. The latter can be explained either by taking as a basis the most elementary form of adaptation, and by assuming the borrowing of agricultural life from groups of a more evolved culture, or by leaving the higher form as an impoverishment determined by cultural isolation, or by the [130] suppression in particularly inhospitable regions which would have imposed secondary forms of adaptation. However, it is only by an appeal to all the available sources of information which should include, besides sociological studies, the study of the language and the material culture, and by comparison with the groups living in the same geographic atmosphere, that an attempt to interpret these problems can reasonably be undertaken. 121